

Better Together!

University-School Partners Address Shortage of Teachers of the Deaf

Lauri Nelson, Ph.D., Dorie Noll, Ph.D., Elaine Smolen, Ph.D., Casey Reimer, Ph.D.
Maria Hartman, Ph.D., Renee Lucero, Ph.D., Sofia Ramirez, Ed.D.

Teacher Training Programs in Listening and Spoken Language Deaf Education who are also OPTION University Partners

University teacher training programs and educational programs that serve children who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) have a shared goal to increase the number of professionals who are highly qualified to work with DHH children and their families. However, shared efforts toward that goal have been limited, with clear indications that novel recruitment and retention strategies are needed.



OPTION Schools, Inc. is an international, non-profit organization comprised of listening and spoken language programs and schools for children who are deaf or hard of hearing in Canada, South America, and the United States.

Upon recognizing that growing and sustaining professional capacity in DHH education will require a concerted national effort, five university DHH education graduate programs, all of whom have active 325K grants, partnered with OPTION, a network of 43 North American early childhood programs that focus on developing listening and spoken language (LSL) for children who are DHH.

Our collaboration, called OPTION University Partners, has two primary aims:

To increase awareness of the field of LSL Deaf Education and the rewarding employment opportunities available in a variety of settings.

To recruit and retain highly skilled early career professionals to ameliorate critical shortages and serve children who are DHH and their families.

We promote increased awareness of LSL DHH professional opportunities by engaging in targeted outreach to undergraduate students and faculty in communication sciences and other related fields.

We host exhibit booths at various local and national conferences to distribute information about graduate programs in DHH education, including advertised current career opportunities for SLPs and audiologists at OPTION programs.

At these conferences, we engage in conversations with hundreds of students and faculty, many of whom express they were not aware of LSL services nor that DHH education was an option for graduate study.

We hold guest lectures, virtual open houses, and targeted marketing to students who are considering graduate school and to describe the exciting and rewarding LSL DHH professional training options.

We host virtual career fairs for OPTION programs to meet with students to describe their programs and career opportunities through lightning talks and small-group networking.

We offer training options for paraprofessionals currently employed in OPTION programs to earn a Master of Education degree while remaining in their employment settings and their home locations.